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ABSTRACT

Recent case studies of social effects of rapid community growth associated with energy development in the western states have relied primarily on qualitative data with limited use of agency records, population surveys, and other secondary sources. While providing the first essential step in the orderly development of a scientific approach to research in this area, these studies are ripe with substantive suggestions of issues and topics needing precise conceptualization and careful analysis. The need for developing precise conceptual and analytic approaches is highlighted not only by demands of scientific methodology but by the highly controversial nature of the phenomenon to be investigated. Many studies have concluded that rapid population growth and economic increase ("boom-town" development) have resulted in dramatic increases in personal and social disorganization in the communities. While it is apparent that rapid changes in employment and population size are happening in communities where energy development is occurring, it is far from clear that these changes are producing a dislocation in operation of moral norms. One line of research to explaining changes associated with boom towns is indicated by the suggestion that previous community conditions and characteristics of the growth itself might influence these changes. (BRR)

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Social Disruption and Rapid Community
Growth: An Explication of the
"Boom-Town" Hypotheses*



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SOCIAL DISRUPTION AND RAPID COMMUNITY GROWTH: AN
EXPLICATION OF THE "BOOM-TOWN" HYPOTHESES

Introduction

Recent case studies of social effects of rapid community growth associated with energy development in the states of the Old West (i.e., the northern Great Plains) continue, in many ways, a research tradition extending over nearly a half-century. Significant contributions to understanding how communities deal with rapid change and to the development of public policies for managing change have been made by earlier studies such as Selznick's (1949) analysis of the effects of the Tennessee Valley Authority on rural communities, Carr and Stermer's (1951) description of social conditions in Willow Run, Michigan (which grew rapidly as a war-materials production center during World War II), Breese et al.'s (1965) summary of impacts of massive developments during the 1960's in four eastern states and Summers et al.'s (1976) survey of the effects of industrial development in rural communities over recent decades. The recent studies in the Old West represent, as did their predecessors, a response by social scientists to contemporary issues of apparent social importance.

These latter studies have relied primarily on qualitative data, such as ethnographic descriptions and key informant interviews, with limited use of agency records, population surveys and other secondary sources. Few reports of the studies have been published in refereed, peer-reviewed outlets, though a number have appeared as manuscripts read to professional society meetings, reports to sponsors of environmental impact assessments, and working papers of research groups. A review of the reports reveals

them to contain, as is perhaps the case in any newly emerging research area, a mixture of undocumented assertions, partially articulated theoretical models, passionate ideological judgments and rich qualitative descriptions. In brief, this literature has provided the first essential step in the orderly development of a scientific approach to research in this area. It is ripe with substantive suggestions of issues and topics needing precise conceptualization and careful analysis. The need for taking the next step, that is for developing precise conceptual and analytic approaches, is highlighted not only by the demands of scientific methodology but by the highly controversial nature of the phenomenon to be investigated (see Morrison, 1979).

The purpose of this section is to explicate the main hypotheses about social psychological and interpersonal impacts of growth which are implied - and occasionally stated - in the studies of Old West communities in which energy-related development has brought about rapid population and economic increase in recent years. Many of the studies have concluded that such growth, referred to as "boom-town" development has resulted in dramatic increases in personal and social disorganization in the communities. Identification of the causal postulates assumed by these studies is intended to contribute toward developing more definitive tests of the hypotheses and toward developing a more adequate theoretical interpretation of such changes and causal sequences as can, in fact, be documented.

The Boom-Town Papers

The general tone of a number of papers on boom towns is expressed by the opening sentences of two of the most frequently cited of them:

The history of power production - synonymous with "boom development" in Wyoming is a dismal record of human eco system wastage. Frontier expansion without adequate planning has left cities crippled by shameful environments which cause human casualties (Kohrs, 1974:1);

and

The energy boom town in the western United States is apt to be a bad place to live. It's apt to be a bad place to do business (Gilmore, 1976:535).

Kohr's discussion, based upon his experience as clinical director of a counseling center in Wyoming, suggests that overcrowding coupled with inadequate planning for meeting needs produces pathological behavior, particularly "drunkenness, anomie, mental discord, suicide attempts and teenage rebellion" (1974:2). He describes, what is termed the "Gillette Syndrome":

A housewife after fighting mud, wind, inadequate water disposal systems, a crowded mobile home and unruly children all day, snaps at her husband as he returns from a 10-hour shift. He responds by heading back downtown and spending the night at a bar drinking and trading stories with men from similar circumstances (1974:3).

This typical pattern, Kohrs says, leads frequently to divorce and to suicide attempts; the latter he says, occur at the rate of one per 250 people (1974:3). Data, from unspecified sources, are cited to support assertions about increases in depression, school dropout rates, juvenile delinquency, criminal activity, welfare case loads, mental health problems and several other social problems. In that neither the postulates of his argument nor the sources of his data are discussed, the assertions made by Kohrs have little scientific merit. His discussion, however, has been cited frequently in other papers as providing primary documentation of social disruptions

(e.g., Gould, 1978:20; Gilmore, 1976:536; Foster, 1977:9; Freudenburg, 1976:11); Carnes and Friesema, n.d., circa 1973; Little, 1976).

Gilmore (1976) argues that rapid population growth resulting from increased basic employment in energy development strains the capacity of communities to provide "goods, services and intangibles" (p. 536). Specifically, he says (without citation or evidence), "in most boom towns a 15 percent growth rate leads to institutional breakdowns in the labor market, the housing market, and the system for financing local public facilities" (p. 536). This results, he says, in a "degraded quality of life" with alienation, suspiciousness, and mental health problems (particularly of women in trailer courts) following; and with productivity declines at the order of 20 percent (p. 536). Support for these assertions is claimed by Gilmore in references to Kohrs (1974, discussed above); and Gilmore and Duff (1975). Gilmore and Duff (1975), reporting findings of a case study of Sweetwater County (Rock Springs), Wyoming, repeat these assertions, noting a ninefold increase in case loads of a mental health clinic in five years (p. 12) and an increase in crime rates requiring a 60 percent increase in law enforcement costs (p. 14) - with no sources of these data indicated. Gilmore and Duff (1975) also claim (without evidence indicated) that "5 percent is generally about as much growth as a small community can comfortably absorb" (p. 2). These two publications, one in Science (Gilmore, 1976) and the other in book form (Gilmore and Duff, 1975), and specifically these passages concerning community absorption capacity, mental health, and crime, have been cited as primary documentation by all of those noted above as citing Kohrs.

This pattern of undocumented assertion being cited in subsequent studies as documentation is, unfortunately, common in this literature. Foster (1977) cites Kohrs and Gilmore and Duff and adds that a staff member of a mental health clinic indicated that "long-time residents are the ones most affected by the disruptions," and that "the long-time resident is more likely to become an alcoholic or suffer from mental illness" (p. 9). O'Hare and Stinson (1977) cite Foster as documentation of their assertion that long-time residents are thus disposed (p. 12); and they cite Little as ^usource for their assertion that the crucial disruptions result from rapid growth; Little cites Gilmore and Duff as the source of his assertion of the same.

What we have thus far in support of the propositions that overcrowding and inadequate services in rapidly growing communities cause divorce, mental illness, juvenile delinquency, suicide attempts and several other problems are the testimonies of two clinicians and undocumented reports by Gilmore and Duff concerning the case load of a mental health clinic and the budget of a police department. Freudenburg (1978) reports that in Craig, Colorado, which he studied over a two-year period, population increased by 100 percent, property crime by 220 percent, crime against persons by 900 percent, family disturbances by 250 percent, child behavior problems by 100 percent, alcohol related problems by 550 percent and drug related problems by 1400 percent. His sources?: Freudenburg et al., 1977 (unpublished), McKeown and Lantz, 1977 (unpublished) and Alma Lantz, of the Colorado Western Regional Mental Health Center (1977, personal communication). While several studies have used survey and/or systematic participant observation techniques to gather data on attitudes and on socioeconomic and other characteristics

of residents of rapidly growing communities (Freudenburg, 1978; 1979; Gold, 1974; 1976; Murdock and Schriner, 1978; 1979; Cortese and Jones, 1977) only two studies, both unpublished, have presented replicable data on the indicators of problems said to be increasing by Gilmore and Duff (1975), Kohrs (1974) and Freudenburg (1978). One of these, Little (1976), used FBI data to show crime trends in Page, Arizona (a town developed by the Federal government to accommodate dam construction workers), associated with population growth. Little found that "crime and population increases roughly parallel one another" (1976:25). He interpreted this lack of any significant increase in the rate of crime as support for his hypothesis that population growth causes an increase in crime. Thompson's (1979) analysis of crime data on selected Wyoming counties employed more conventional interpretive standards. He found a significant increase in the rate of crimes against property in Campbell County (Gillette), Wyoming, during a period of rapid growth; but contrary to the assertions made by Kohrs and Gilmore, he found no support for the hypotheses that rates of crime against persons, welfare demands, and divorce rates would increase significantly.

Implicit Hypotheses

The assumption by Little that increased crime, even with no significant increase in the rate of crime, is a negative consequence of growth, implies that scale itself, as distinguished from the stress of rapid change in scale, is assumed to be detrimental to human well-being. While none of the studies to date have drawn an explicit distinction along these lines and most, in fact, have assumed influences of both types, the implicit distinction is useful for identifying the two larger bodies of sociological theory

which have, albeit implicitly (and perhaps inadvertently), informed the analyses. One is concerned with the consequences of scale of community social organization and the other with the consequences of rapid social change. The former has been developed in classic contrasts of ideal community types, such as folk-urban (Redfield, 1941), Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft (Tonnies, 1963) and sacred-secular (Becker, 1950); and the latter, most pointedly, in the concept of l'anomie (Durkheim, 1951). In general the classical typologies, including those which have emphasized change (e.g., Durkheim's treatment of the transformation from mechanical to organic solidarity, 1947), have been directed at explaining differences in social organization rather than differences in consequences for social well-being. One type of social organization is based upon informal, primary relationships in small, relatively stable and isolated communities. The other, in these contrasts, is based upon formal, exchange relationships in large, heterogenous and rapidly changing communities and with close ties between the local community and the larger society. The idea that these entail different consequences for the well-being of people has been stimulated by critiques of modern, urban life most notably by Georg Simmel (1903) and Louis Wirth (1938). Simmel described the modern metropolis as a setting in which people become desensitized, out of defensive necessity, to the feelings and needs of others, and thus mask part of their own human potential for feeling. Wirth argued that increased size, density and heterogeneity of local population require that informal mechanisms of social control and interpersonal contact be replaced with formal, impersonal mechanisms. The latter, he assumed, are less effective than the

former in providing a basis of personality organization and integration for the individual. Thus he assumed that "personal disorganization, mental breakdown, suicide, delinquency, crime, corruption and disorder might be expected . . . to be more prevalent in the urban than in the rural community" (Wirth, 1938:23). Little (1976), Carnes and Friesema (n.d., circa 1973), Cortese and Jones, 1976; 1977) and Freudenburg (1976; 1978; 1979) offer various forms and levels of support to the idea that urbanization increases human suffering in "boom towns."

Durkheim (1951), in developing an interpretation of fluctuations in suicide rates, used the term, l'anomie (used hereinafter, as in most American literature, as anomie) to refer to a condition of "normlessness" produced by sudden, drastic changes in economic well-being (prosperity or loss). According to his conception of social order, the role of norms, particularly moral norms, is to maintain a brake on the aspirations of people. A sudden, major change, makes the norms ineffective; aspirations are unbridled; frustration ensues for many; and the suicide rate goes up. The studies of rapid change in Old West communities have not used a theory of anomie, as such, but several of those dealing with suicide and other behaviors have used interpretive propositions which are consistent with this theory. The thesis of several papers (e.g., Gold, 1974; Freudenburg, 1979; Cortese and Jones, 1977) is that the moral order is being upset by rapid changes.

Reviews of literature by Carnes and Friesema (n.d., circa 1973) and Little (1976) have to do mainly with the assumption that urbanization of formerly rural areas reduces autonomy and intimacy, increases the role of formal mechanisms in governance, undermines family solidarity, leads to

secularization of life and encourages status cleavages among people. Evidence offered by others is accepted more or less uncritically in both papers. Numerous specific linkages between urbanization and pathology are drawn, such as the following:

Transient populations both in the popular mind and in reality, have come to be associated with high crime rates. Boom towns prove no exception to this rule (Little, 1976:17);

and

Crime rates tend to rise, indicating the church can no longer enforce its moral codes and prevent antisocial behavior (Carnes and Friesema, n.d., circa 1973:24).

The basic postulate of these analyses seems to be that communities experiencing population growth suffer a general deterioration in quality of life because they become more urban than rural in social organization.

Cortese and Jones (1976) comment both on urbanization, citing Carnes and Friesema (n.d., circa 1973) as basic sources regarding growing individualism and family discontent, and on rapid change, citing Gilmore (1976) regarding increased alienation, lower-class psychological stress and nostalgia, and citing local newspaper articles as evidence of increased stratification and of widespread mental illness (said to be of mild varieties) among women. In a later paper, Cortese and Jones (1977) use theoretical notions from Wirth and Roland Warren (regarding the "Great Change," i.e., from rural to urban) to interpret findings of their "ethnographic" research in three "boom towns" and to support generalizations which they claim to be universally "applicable whenever small rural communities become boom towns" (p. 78). They conclude, after surveying

many changes reported by informants, that "these mutually reinforcing cultural changes add up to the process of urbanization or, depending upon one's orientation, modernization" (p. 85). Gold (1974) reporting on ethnographic research in two communities experiencing rapid growth, observes that "the traditional 'gemeinschaft' type of rural society is being superseded by a much looser form of social organization" (p. 9) and that he found "pervasive and oppressive feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability throughout the study region" (p. 6). Indeed, he notes that some ranchers in the area, who have been generally individualistic in the past, are now "coming back to gemeinschaft" (pp. 7-8). Another report by Gold (1977) describes social impacts of energy development as a form of "trespass," in the perspective of the ranchers. Nellis (1974) draws a parallel between the modern confrontation of newcomers and old-timers in Hanna, Wyoming, and that between the ranchers and the homesteaders in the 1890's.

Few of the studies dealing explicitly with social and psychological stresses have stated formal hypotheses. An exception is that by Freudenburg (1976). Based on his review of the literature (including acceptance of assertions by Kohrs and by Gilmore and Duff), and his assessment of the relevant findings of social psychiatry, he concludes that "sheer change" plays an important role "in producing anxiety and maladaptation" (p. 14). His basic postulate is that:

A social fabric can stretch only so far and so fast without shredding, particularly in the case of a tightly-knit community (p. 15).

And he argues that some people are more vulnerable to stress than others by virtue of their social characteristics. With these assumptions he hypothesizes that stress will be positively associated with the size and suddenness of the change, the percentage of people 55 years and over, the number of unemployed people entering the community, the unemployment rate in the larger region, the notoriety of the project outside the region and the proportion of the population with lower educations or from small towns (these latter two being especially vulnerable because they tend to take present life patterns for granted); and he hypothesizes that stress will be negatively associated with original population size, extent of local unemployment, percent of the population 18-35 years of age, the proportion of jobs going to persons already in the area, and the skill requirements of new jobs (more skilled jobs, he says, would be less likely to attract "riffraf," p. 17). His basic thesis is that *gesellschaft* tends to bring *anomie* (p. 20).

Despite the obvious deficiencies of this literature - the casualness of scholarship in it, the highly speculative and impressionistic nature of much of it, and the virtual absence of hard evidence - it suggests both a need and a potential for highly significant sociological research, yet to be conducted. What we have here, overall, is a very general suggestion that rapid population growth associated with energy development in essentially rural areas of the Old West might, under certain as yet unspecified conditions, result in either transformation from rural to urban patterns of social life or anomic disruption of social life, or both, and that these consequences might, in ways yet to be postulated with any precision, have negative effects on social psychological or interpersonal

well-being, which of course are also, to this point, unmeasured phenomena. On the face of it, such a suggestion could be dismissed as being purely speculative. The persistence with which it arises, however, in both academic and public discussions, encourages analysis of it. Several steps will be required to translate this general suggestion into a scientific test.

Explication of the Hypotheses

Use of propositions based on concepts of urbanism and anomie to predict and interpret changes in small communities of the Old West which are experiencing growth in conjunction with energy development entails a number of assumptions, some of which are amenable to research and a few of which can be accepted or rejected with readily available evidence. The proposition that urbanism produces human suffering has been the focus of dozens of studies over the past 50 years. These studies have followed two general approaches, both of which can be seen to be represented in the boom-town literature. The first approach has been to assume that contemporary differences between rural and urban communities can be interpreted in terms of the classical rural-urban typology and thus that changes on the rural-urban continuum can be interpreted in terms of the theory of societal transformation developed by Tonnies, Durkheim, Becker and others. This approach has been criticized on both logical and empirical grounds. Logical criticisms have been focused on the fallacy of assuming that personal organization is caused by social organization (Robinson, 1959), which has frequently been done in theories of social causation of mental disorder (Leighton, 1974). Empirically based criticisms of this approach have focused on generally conclusive evidence that the type of social

organization indicated as rural in the classical typology bears little resemblance to communities of any size in modern society (Dewey, 1960; Mann, 1965; Bernard, 1973).

These criticisms may be applied directly to studies which have used this approach to interpret changes assumed to occur in the communities now experiencing energy development. Considering first the empirical criticism, it is obvious from even a cursory review of the history of the Old West, that small communities, prior to the recent siting of energy installations, were more urban than rural, as these concepts have been used in the classical typologies. These communities have histories extending over less than a century. Many of them were established in conflict with aboriginal settlements (some of which, indeed, may have been rural in the classical sense) and most have experienced successive waves of conflict among various groupings with interests in the resources of the area. The economic bases of community life in this region - cattle ~~raising~~ ^{grazing} for outside markets, mining, recreation, etc. - have been extralocal in focus throughout modern history. There is little evidence to suggest that these have been small, homogeneous, self-contained communities with closeness and order growing out of an expression of natural will. Rather they have been small urban centers with a style of life differing more in scale than in essential quality from that in larger centers. The logical criticism of the assumption that present community conditions produce distinctive personality characteristics is also applicable in obvious ways. People in these communities have been in touch with the outside in virtually all aspects of their social lives, and there has been extensive movement of

people into and out of these communities. Thus personalities of the present residents - the "old-timers" as the "newcomers" - are products of a much larger field than is included in present community conditions.

The second approach in using the rural-urban typology and the theory of transformation in modern society has been to accept the above criticisms as valid and to focus upon application of the postulates of the transformation theory rather than upon the assumption that the classical rural-urban distinction can be made in modern life. This approach has been concerned mainly with understanding the effects of variation in population size and density among modern, urban communities. One set of studies following this approach has investigated the effects of these variations on behaviors and attitudes of individuals which are assumed to be stress-related. Several studies, using a variety of measurement strategies, have examined rural-urban differences in the incidence of symptoms of "psychological distress." Some of these have found a higher incidence of these symptoms in rural populations than reported in urban populations (Shroeder and Beegle, 1951; Leighton, Harding, Macklin, Hughes and Leighton, 1963; Edgerton, Bentz and Hollister, 1970; Srole, 1972; 1978; Inkeles, 1976; Webb and Collette, 1977; 1979; Webb, 1978; Mazur, 1979), but others have found a lower incidence of these symptoms in rural populations than in urban populations (Frumkin, 1954; Summers, Seiler and Hongh, 1971; Laird, 1973; Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend, 1974). The studies with more extensive geographic coverage, that is those using national survey data (Srole, 1972; 1978; Webb and Collette, 1977; 1979) have found a greater incidence of psychological distress in rural areas and small

towns than in large cities, but questions remain as to the influence of exogenous variables other than community size (Crothers, 1979; Webb and Collette, 1979; Srole, 1978). Much ambiguity remains in the total body of research evidence on rural-urban differences in mental health (Flax, Wagenfeld, Evans and Wets, 1979:27). Such a conclusion seems inevitable, and may be applied to the situation in boom towns, on the basis of two ~~assumptions~~ ^{assumptions}, cited above, which are supported clearly by previous research, these being: 1) that individuals are influenced in their attitudes, behaviors and other characteristics by the convergence of an array of forces only some of which are social (Wrong, 1961; Yinger, 1965) and 2) that migration and extralocal attachments of individuals in modern society reduce the likelihood that present place of residence will greatly influence persisting aspects of personalities (Srole, 1978). Factors other than present community size and density appear to have greater effect than those on the incidence of attitudes and behaviors of individuals discussed by Wirth (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974) and in the boom-town papers.

Another set of studies following this second approach (i.e., that of examining community effects through reference to transformation postulates but without equating contemporary rural life with the classical rural type) has been more concerned with the influence of community size on social relationships. These studies have provided findings which support some of the propositions stated by Wirth and Simmel. Many studies have shown that complexity of local social organization increases with local population size, and a number of these have found this for rural as well as for urban communities (Duncan and Reis, 1956; Young and Young, 1963;

Kasarda, 1974). Further, consistent with Wirth's contention, rates of violent crime against persons, some of which are explicitly interactional, have been found to increase with city population size, and this relationship has been found to persist, though at a reduced level, when socioeconomic and other influences are controlled (Webb, 1972; Hock, 1976). In addition, Milgram (1970) has summarized a number of comparative investigations which support Simmel's suggestion that unfriendly, distrustful exchanges in transitory interactions are more likely to occur in large cities than in small towns. A theory to account for these findings without reference to a societal transformation phenomenon has been supplied by Mayhew and Levinger (1976), based on graph theory. They argue that interaction potential increases as a multiplicative (rather than as a linear) effect of increases in aggregate size. Thus, the rate of violent crime increases with community population size, but so do the rates of all other types of interaction, including both friendly and unfriendly transactions. This theory predicts the positive association of rates of violent crime, such as criminal homicide, to city population size, but it does not account for two other more or less well-documented patterns in the ecological distribution of criminal homicides, one being the tendency for national criminal homicide rates to decline with urbanization (Quinney, 1963) and the other being the tendency for this rate to be higher in rural areas than in small cities (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1978). It would appear from the evidence to date in this series of studies, that more can be learned about community size effects through further examination of interaction than through examination of presumed effects of this on individual behavior.

It is also apparent, contrary to assertions in the boom-town studies, that the issue of whether size effects are positive or negative for social well-being is far from being closed. Most indicators of socioeconomic well-being and quality of social services, for example, show a tendency to increase with community population size, and most direct indicators of human suffering (e.g., morbidity and mortality rates) decrease with increased local population size (Ross, Bluestone and Hines, 1979). The interaction effects which accompany these variations in community size may be judged to be positive in some ways but negative in others. The general trends seem to support a theory which locates "optimum" local size at the intersection of two curves, one showing the effects of size on access to resources for meeting needs and the other showing the effects of size on problems of integration in interaction. These appear to be curves rather than linear continua because both appear to have "thresholds," or asymptotes, at some point. Access to resources for meeting needs appears to increase with size, but to decline beyond some threshold (Hock, 1976). Problems of integration appear to increase with size, but appear also, as indicated by the pattern of murder rates, to be greater in rural communities than in small and middle-sized cities. Such a theory might be elaborated from the general evidence, but this has not been a concern to date of the boom-town papers.

Questions concerning implied and explicit use of the concept of anomie in boom-town research can be raised on many of the same grounds as concerning use of the concept of urbanism. Two general questions are: 1) does rapid change have the effects claimed by Durkheim in his development of the theory of anomie and 2) are such changes and effects of these

occurring in the towns where rapid growth is occurring in connection with energy development? There have been many discussions of Durkheim's theory of anomie in the literature and many studies, particularly of suicide, have been based more or less upon it. Few studies, however, have actually attempted to measure anomie. More often, anomie has been taken to be indicated either by measures of its presumed consequences (e.g., increases in suicide) or by measures of its presumed causes (e.g., rapid social change). Thus anomie has been treated as a kind of "field" concept, such as used in physics to refer to interconnections which are assumed to hold but cannot be shown to hold, between detectable events. Many studies have attempted to measure a condition analogous to anomie in the attitudes of individuals, with concepts of anomia and alienation used for this purpose. These have shown that such attitudes - which may be summarized by the term "malaise" - are more associated with socio-economic status variables than with conditions in community or societal organization and change (Fischer, 1973). Some studies of suicide and other behaviors assumed to be implicated by Durkheim's theory have reported findings which support the hypothesis that such suffering increases with rapid change, but other studies have found that it does not (citations available, to be inserted later). Two findings at the national level seem to question the usefulness of Durkheim's theory. One is that the national suicide rate has remained relatively constant, despite turbulent social change, over the past 20 years, at about 10-11 per 100,000 persons (Dublin, 1963; Ross, Bluestone and Hines, 1979; Vital Statistics of the United States, Mortality, 1976). The other is that variations in suicide rates during this period have come to be negatively associated with

socioeconomic status indicators, rather than positively associated with these as hypothesized by Durkheim. The evidence concerning the role of anomie in suicide and other stress-related behavior is sufficiently ambiguous, however, that a contribution might be made through precise measurement of this relationship in boom-town research. This would require, of course, that: 1) evidence be presented showing outcomes such as predicted by Durkheim (e.g., increased suicide rates associated with rapid change) and 2) the state of anomie assumed to intervene between these outcomes and rapid change be measured rather than merely assumed to exist.

While it is apparent that rapid changes in employment and population size are occurring in communities where energy development is occurring, it is far from clear that these changes are producing a dislocation in the operation of moral norms. The transformation theory, developed by Durkheim among others can be interpreted as referring to a change which has reduced the influence of local social organization, *per se*, on individual behaviors, such as suicide. Little evidence has been presented to indicate that moral norms such as organize life in modern society have been displaced by the rapid changes in these communities. If these were stable, relatively autonomous communities of the type described as rural in the classical typology, a case could perhaps be made for regarding the changes as an assault upon the basic moral norms of social life. That they are not of this type is apparent, and the changes must be regarded as an acceleration of preexisting trends rather than as a fundamental dislocation. Flexibility, in the sense of structural ability to undergo substantial changes without a fundamental dislocation, is built into modern social organization in a number of ways, perhaps most crucially in

the fact that modern integration depends more upon rational accommodations than upon adherence to traditional practices. The addition of large numbers of people to a community in a short period of time certainly places a strain upon the ability of these modern modes of integration, but it seems unlikely that the kinds of strains described in the studies to date would exceed the ability of these mechanisms to retain an orderly state. In brief it would appear that the communities experiencing these changes are becoming larger and more dynamic rather than anomic. Temporary dislocations might occur in regard to some types of services and amenities, but if the flexibility of modern society is as great as we suspect, these can be overcome in short order given the economic resources, which are increased by the boom phenomenon. Many of the "newcomers," that is the workers and their families, in these communities are involved in relatively stable networks which move from place to place; thus they have in many instances experienced boom conditions in the past. Unlike migratory farm workers, who have similar levels of experience with rapid change, these workers are relatively well paid and well educated, thus they possess added resources for adaptation to inconveniences, which for them are generally temporary. It is the plight of the "old-timers" in the boom towns, however, which has received most attention in the case studies. The lives of the old-timers are said to be most severely disrupted. The descriptions thus far have dealt mainly with disruptions among persons who might be said to constitute the ~~power~~ elite in these communities, i.e., the merchants, politicians, and ranchers whose power bases are threatened. Little has been written about changes in the lives of the

lower and working classes. Walton (1967) and others who have studied the effects of increased vertical ties between the community and the larger society have suggested that the local disruptions which these ties bring can have the effect of increasing local competition and thus of increasing the potential for equity in the local distributive system; Walton also suggested, however, that the turbulence associated with such changes might, under some conditions, result in a reduction in the sense of community among local people.

The ability of a community to absorb growth and change without a permanent loss of local cohesion is likely dependent upon a number of factors including the level of cohesion and its basis prior to the change and the degree and type of change involved. The boom-town papers have generally ignored such variables (an exception being Freudenberg, 1978, noted above) and have asserted that the forces of change have had more or less uniformly negative effects on communities.

In summary, it appears that the urbanism hypothesis is plausible only in regard to the effects of differences in community size upon the types and levels of social interaction likely to be observed. The hypothesis that urbanism is inherently damaging to individual well-being and personal organization has little basis in research; in fact the weight of the evidence is slightly to the contrary. The anomie hypothesis appears to have little applicability in the conditions described in the communities which are regarded as boom towns, but this is a moot point in that anomie is yet to be measured adequately in research. A more fruitful line of research than that indicated from the anomie perspective, is that

suggested by Walton's observation that the retention of local cohesion under conditions of increased vertical ties is related to the level and basis of cohesion prior to the change and to the level and type of force involved in the change. These indicate two variables, one in pre-existing community structure and the other in type of change, which have not been examined in boom-town research and likely have important effects on the changes associated with rapid growth.

If, as argued here, the urbanism hypothesis is unfounded in logic and previous evidence, except in regard to the effects of size on multiplying the potential for all forms of social interaction, and the anomie hypothesis is inappropriate for accounting for rapid growth in these communities because of their flexibility (deriving from ~~this~~ ^{their} modern, urban form of social organization), little remains to be tested of the assertions in the boom-town papers other than their empirical assertions that rates of various disorders and disruptions increase with growth. If these assertions should prove, in the general case, to be true, what could be made of them? An answer is suggested in the two lines of research indicated above as having previous support. One of these, suggested by the proposition that size influences interaction density, would be concerned with examining a variety of what might be referred to as nominal, competing hypotheses. These would be nominal in that they have to do with the influence of forces other than local social organization, which has been the focus of the boom-town studies to date. Three kinds of hypotheses of this type can be suggested. One is that many of the behaviors which might be taken as dependent variables from the

urbanism and anomie perspectives can be explained by changes in population composition of growing towns. Crime, for example, is disproportionately committed by young adult male members of minority groupings who are unemployed or underemployed. An increase in crime in a given community might be the result of an increase in the proportion of the population in this grouping or in some other grouping which, on the basis of national evidence, is shown to be the "population at risk" to a significant degree. Such hypotheses can be developed for most of the indicators likely to be selected for study. Divorces are more common in certain age groupings than others. Suicide is more common in certain occupations than others. Another kind of nominal competing hypothesis would be that changes in a given community reflect changes in the larger society in patterns which affect the dependent variables selected for study. To test such a hypothesis would require ~~comparison~~^{comparison} of the community with others of its size and type and ~~comparison~~^{comparison} of changes in rate of whatever is being considered with national, or at least regional, changes in these rates. A third kind of nominal, competing hypothesis of substantial importance in this area of research is the hypothesis that indicators of dependent variables such as divorce rates, crime rates, rates of mental disorder, mortality rates, etc., are unreliable and/or invalid. The incidence of marital dissolution which does not result in formal divorce is unknown, as are the true rates of most crimes. Mental disorder, whatever its origins in psychosocial and biogenic functioning, is a social label. Deaths in all cases have multiple causes, and officials who determine and record the proximate and secondary of these have varying skills and

perspectives. Covariation of the influences postulated in these nominal, competing hypotheses with one another and with those indicated in more substantive hypotheses is likewise possible, and cannot be dismissed as a randomly distributed factor.

A second line of research to explain changes associated with rapid, energy-related growth, is indicated by the suggestion that previous community conditions and characteristics of the growth itself might influence these changes. Development of the implications of this suggestion will require an alternative theory rather than a series of nominal, competing hypotheses. This will be the topic of another paper (or section).

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